

# Mentoring: Establishing a Legacy, Shaping the Future

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**D**URING A TIME when I felt convicted to learn and grow through my elders' experiences, I wrote the following poem:

*I'm looking for a man with sweat on his brow  
and callused areas on his palms;  
I'm looking for a man who cares to say you  
messed up, now get up, look up, and continue  
pressing forward;  
I'm looking for a man to say son you're at a  
fork in the road, recognize it, respect it, but  
make a decision and move left or right;  
I'm looking for a man who'll stand at the door  
of a relationship and say come to school son,  
I've got a wealth of knowledge to share;  
I'm looking for a man who simply wants to give  
a little of himself to make a world of difference  
in me;  
I'm looking for a man who has seen what  
I now see.<sup>1</sup>*

Discussions with and stories told by older soldiers and heroes—teachers wanting to pass on life lessons—inculcate in young warriors an indelible link between the past and future. Studying history allows us to learn from others' practices, but mentoring takes that study one step farther by bringing about learning through others' experiences and by allowing the learner to share the sights, tastes, sounds, anguish, joy, or dread the mentor experienced.

The preeminence of the Army, the profession of arms, and the Nation rests on transferring knowledge, skills, and expertise from one generation to the next. Mentors pass on enduring facets of the military profession such as its history, traditions, and values as well as the will to fight and win. During a professional soldier's career, these facets become the foundation for a journey of decision and change.

This article challenges veterans and neophytes to seek out one of the most important aspects of the military profession—a mentoring relationship. The U.S. Army needs greater introspection and professional discourse among its future leaders.

Most literature addressing the origin of mentoring recognizes the original "Mentor" as the character

in Homer's classic poem, "The Odyssey." However, scholars who are familiar with the original work believe the mentoring model Homer portrayed would make most relationships fizzle rather than sizzle. In fact, the modern use of the term more likely comes from the work of 18th-century French writer and educator, Francois de Salignac de La Mothe-Fenelon.<sup>2</sup>

The *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* describes a mentor as "a trusted counselor or guide; tutor, coach" and a protégé as "one who is protected or trained or whose career is furthered by a person of experience, prominence, or influence."<sup>3</sup> These definitions describe the roles of those in a mentoring relationship, but what defines the process of mentoring? The Army's leadership doctrine, as outlined in U.S. Army Field Manual 22-100, *Army Leadership*, defines mentoring as follows: "Mentoring is the proactive development of each subordinate through observing, assessing, coaching, teaching, developmental counsel, and evaluating that results in people being treated with fairness and equal opportunity. Mentoring is an inclusive process (not an exclusive one) for everyone under a leader's charge."<sup>4</sup> Mentoring is a living, breathing process that focuses on people and changes lives. Mentoring is a cultivating endeavor that helps individuals mature and encourages action. When contemplating mentoring, the images of plowing, turning over, or tilling the soil come to mind, all of which imply cultivation. Mentoring is leadership at its best.

Mentoring outside the military differs from the Army's doctrinal definition in two ways. First, mentoring is exclusive and personal. Second, leaders must coach, not mentor, everyone under their charge. Central to this idea, asserting the exclusivity of mentoring, is understanding that mentoring is, at best, exercised one on one. Just as people choose their circle of close friends, the mentoring relationship arises through an informal, mutual selection, regardless of who initiated the association. As such, one may choose not to mentor or become the protégé of another because of personalities or idiosyncrasies. Thus, mentoring is inherently exclusive.

The importance of the mentoring relationship sharpens the differences between mentoring and coaching as they pertain to the time and energy invested and the nature and expected use of guidance given. Although a truly altruistic goal, these issues dissuade my confidence in leaders effectively

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mentoring everyone under their charge. The time involved in establishing a quality mentoring relationship is linked to developing trust. Trust manifests itself over time through various trials, conquests, and day-to-day life experiences. Trust seasons the mentor-protégé relationship. This is the point at which efficacy of leadership—mentoring—is unmatched. The direct, day-to-day contact a leader has with a soldier is usually limited and does not allow the deep relationship necessary for mentoring.

From another perspective, a mentor's influence and the lessons taught are bound to intuition rather than to observation. In mentoring, guidance usually provides protégés with perspectives that differ from the ones they hold. This variety facilitates growth, not necessarily specific performance. The protégé may or may not incorporate or apply the advice received. Because mentoring emphasizes the artistic aspects of leadership and addresses broader implications and consequences than those associated with attaining certain performance objectives, mentors do not have to observe their protégé's performance to provide insight and relevant instruction. Coaches generally do.

Athletic coaches are seldom absent from practice. Why? A critical aspect of coaching is observing the players and team's work or performance. Coaches provide feedback based on execution and focus on teaching skills that players may lack.<sup>5</sup> Observing is more closely associated to tasks that leaders perform to reach a performance goal or standard. Leaders must maximize every moment to teach, guide, and develop soldiers in accomplishing specific tasks within the scope of unit and professional goals and objectives. Coaching furthers this necessity.

## The Need

Mentoring relationships nurture and equip future leaders and provide a forum for training tomorrow's guardians today. Mentors give reasons and background information and share perspectives on decisions that need to be made and choices that lie ahead. Mentoring relationships help ensure that, in a transforming Army, people will be historically

grounded yet future oriented. Mentors facilitate passing the baton from one generation to another. More specifically, mentors meet others' needs by functioning in various capacities. Whether they intuitively discern a need or derive its necessity through mutual consensus, mentors attempt to meet their protégés' needs and goals. Some of the capacities in which mentors serve include being—

- Counselors, who advise, counsel, and guide; shed light on consequences of actions; and offer candid assessments.

- Coaches, who train, instruct, and exhort.

- Facilitators, who act as springboards for new opportunities and relationships and are resourcers.

- Advocates, who support the protégé and serve as interlocutors between protégés and their professions.

- Visionaries, who look over the horizon, focusing on possibilities and casting light on the road ahead.

- Masseurs/masseuses, who work out the cramps and sore spots in the protégé's behavior and character by applying the right pressure at the right place, at the right time; massage issues, reshape perspective, and offer insight.

Whether serving as a counselor, coach, or a combination of advisory roles, mentors are needed to prepare and develop the leaders who will command and guide the Army in the future. Mentors enable succeeding generations to carry the baton and win the race. Mentors are the gatekeepers of the Army's future; farmers planting tomorrow's harvest.

## The Utility

The relational aspect of mentoring distinguishes it from other leader development tools. The one-on-one nature of a true mentoring relationship provides a great environment for developing interpersonal and conceptual skills. Mentors help their protégés shape their views of the past, examine contemporary circumstances, and develop visions for the future.

When discussing Army Transformation, focus is often on the changes in force structure that characterize the campaign. But structural change alone will not lead to a capable, competent, and lethal Objective Force. In the Army Vision, Army Chief of Staff General Eric K. Shinseki clearly articulates the need to grow leaders: "The magnificence of our moments as an Army will continue to be delivered by our people. . . . We are about leadership; it is the stock in trade, and it is what makes us different. We take soldiers who enter the force and grow them into leaders for the next generation of soldiers. . . . We invest today in the Nation's leadership for tomorrow."<sup>6</sup> The call to develop leaders who are comfortable with change and adept in anticipating future requirements is essential to maintaining Army Transformation's ongoing momentum. Because of the deep trust and connection that characterize mentoring re-

relationships, mentoring is an excellent way to facilitate leaders' maturity amidst the immense changes and uncertainties of Army Transformation.

In the profession of arms, the rubber does not meet the road through technology or expertly designed organizations but through a soldier's boot print on the enemy's soil. Efforts to remain the best Army

in the world beckon it to expect change—Transformation, Interim Force, Objective Force. Army leaders must be adept at developing, applying, and employing Interim Force capabilities, but they must not become attached to or complacent with them. Leaders must be intellectually malleable so that as the Objective Force develops, they remain aware that

United Nations



Nixon appointee and protégé, George H. W. Bush (left) with the Pakistani ambassador before a United Nations Security Council meeting, 16 December 1971.

### ***Famous Mentors and Their Protégés***

- ▣ **Brent Scowcroft**, U.S. Air Force general and National Security Advisor to former U.S. President George Bush, mentor to **Condoleezza Rice**, National Security Advisor to 44th U.S. President George W. Bush.
- ▣ **Donald Rumsfeld**, U.S. Secretary of Defense, mentor to **Dick Cheney**, U.S. Vice President.
- ▣ **Richard M. Nixon**, 37th U.S. President, mentor to **George H. W. Bush**, 41st U.S. President, and to **Robert Dole**, former Kansas senator.
- ▣ **Boris Yeltsin**, former Soviet President, mentor to **Vladimir Putin**, current Soviet President, and to **Sergei Kiriyyenko**, Soviet Prime Minister.
- ▣ **Fidel Castro**, Cuban President, mentor to **Hugo Chavez**, Venezuelan President.
- ▣ **Robert McNamara**, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, mentor to **Lee Iacocca**, former president of The Chrysler Corporation.
- ▣ **Ralph Waldo Emerson**, essayist, critic, poet, orator, and popular philosopher, mentor to **Henry David Thoreau**, American philosopher and writer.
- ▣ **Benjamin E. Mays**, former president of Morehouse College, mentor to **David Satcher**, U.S. Surgeon General and former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ▣ **Harland Sanders**, founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken, mentor to **Dave Thomas**, founder of Wendy's restaurants.

Peer Systems Consulting Group, Inc., "The Mentor Hall of Fame," accessed 20 January 2002 online at <[www.mentors.ca/mentorpairs.html](http://www.mentors.ca/mentorpairs.html)>.

the Army's formations are still in a state of change. Leaders must pass on to others the heritage of the Legacy Force, the lessons of the Interim Force, and the vision for a dominant Objective Force.

To be effective, changes in personal paradigms must accompany changes in equipment and doctrine. The Army cannot possess a change-averse culture. How can we manage this? Leigh Kibby offers this: "Human nature, which is (in some ways) essentially habitual and focused on predictability, sees change as a threat, which induces a fear response—fight or flight. Both of these are an anathema to improvement. The smart executive knows this and institutes systems, processes and styles that overcome resistance to change. This is where mentoring provides the vehicle and becomes that process. Organizational culture, and commitment to working towards corporate goals, exists at the behavioral level and often in one-to-one interaction where culture lives through personal expression. Change, and willingness to move, happens at this personal level also and comes alive through one-to-one interaction. Enacting change is a personal act that embodies and demonstrates both belief and commitment. Such acts require:

- risk taking (in terms of changing personal patterns) to step outside a personal comfort zone;
- a willingness to explore new territory; and
- the capacity to face fear and still act.

"A mentor is an invaluable tool for developing a personal investment in change and a commitment to it while supporting the individual through the fear, into the risk taking and then finally on to acting."<sup>7</sup>

An early investment in a young leader's career, which inculcates the acceptance and relevance of change and an appreciation of the opportunities that exist in change, will facilitate buy-in and obviate confusion and will help produce leaders who are agile enough to grow through the Interim Force, fine-tune the Objective Force, and lead the Army to develop concepts for the formations that will follow and transcend the Objective Force. Mentoring is an effective intermediary to facilitate changes in both thinking and behavior.

## The Benefits

One benefit of mentoring is that it is significant to those who are involved. Mentors vanquish irrelevance, and protégés blossom through support. Helping others discover the essence of life and to explore, examine, and exploit their distinctive gifts and talents is what mentors do. Mentors learn to understand their protégés so they can develop them into what the protégés want to be. Through this process, the mentor and the protégé experience a second benefit—profound and varied growth.

As the protégé matures, the relationship becomes a crucible of professional debate whereby innova-

tion is checked against the backdrop of experience, and opinion is bridled by historic and experiential analysis. Intellectual staff rides enhance the protégé and, ultimately, the Army and yield yet other benefits from teaching respect for another's perspective and forcing the protégé to express opinions on personal and professional issues. To continually challenge and expand protégés, mentors seek out different methods of instruction, cases to evaluate, or perspectives to explore and, thus, continue to learn and grow themselves. Additional benefits of mentoring include the following:

- Retention. Mentors aid in retention by providing clarity and perspective; they help see through the fog of a career and life.

- Connectivity links generations by managing perceptions separating junior and senior leaders. Communication dispels myopic views usually centered in immaturity, generational differences, lack of exposure, or contextually misapplying information.

- Cost-effectiveness. Mentors do not invest for personal profit but for that of the individual or institution in which they are personally vested. Mentoring fiscally costs the Army nothing—it is a personal investment; if the investment is not made, it could cost the Army its future.

The list of benefits is by no means exhaustive. For mentor and protégé, tangible and intangible benefits abound. As the mentor-protégé bond ages, trust, respect, and accountability are enhanced and bring exponential returns. The individuals involved, their families, associates, the Army, and the nation all share the benefits of challenges met, whether conquered or failed.

## The Attributes

Whether male, female, senior, peer, or subordinate, the mentor or protégé's qualities will differ based on personalities, tolerances, and expectations from the relationship. Nonetheless, some characteristics should be incumbent on those who desire to mentor or to be mentored and on the relationship formed from the mentor-protégé association. Mentors strive to support, comfort, and protect. Mentors are flexible and tolerant, yet principled and steadfast. They are solid, durable, weathered, and reliable. Other attributes include—

- Enthusiasm—eager to serve, wanting to help, to invest in the life of another; interested in developing, equipping, and nurturing the protégé.

- Commitment—dedicated to staying the course, being available, and standing alongside the protégé.

- Self-confidence—support, enable, and empower; be secure in who they are, where they have been, and what they have accomplished; self-worth and personal identity must not be tied to a position or title; comfortable enough to be open and transparent, to share the details of successes and fail-

ures, and to handle conflict with prudence and tact.

- Energy—possessing a contagious determination, vigor, and enthusiasm; elated they are contributing their perspective today to influence tomorrow.

- Optimism—positive, expectant attitude and outlook; a pragmatic dreamer.

- Humility—gives strength, allows one to listen when not inclined to do so and allows introspection and perception.

## Linking Up

In more than 17 years of service, I have neither observed a shortage of protégés nor have I met a mentor who desired a protégé but could not find one. When looking for a mentor, where does one start? Mentors and protégés come in all shapes, sizes, heights, and hues. Suggestions for finding a mentor include the following:

- Canvas the landscape. Look at leaders—seniors, peers, and subordinates, including government civilians and contractors—in your unit and in adjacent organizations.

- Think of leaders from previous assignments and try to determine if they have maintained the reputation you recall. If so, initiate contact with them.

- Discuss your needs with your peers. They can often refer you to someone or ask their mentors for a referral.

- Monitor professional organizations and societies. The constituencies of these groups possess varied talents, backgrounds, and experiences. They generally have one or two things in common with others.

Regardless of the approach, remember that leaders are available and are anxious to help. In your search, consider that your ideal mentor should have a phenomenal amount of knowledge and experience. Recognize that having multiple mentors also has merit. Multiple mentors can stifle cloning and foster thorough development. Decide what you desire out of the relationship. Be patient and select your mentor with care. The person you are searching for will be someone who may have a great deal of influence in your personal and professional life.

Simply put, a mentor does not have to be perfect, only willing. Some will approach you; others only

need to be asked. Some are not willing to invest their time, are not interested in being a mentor, or may not have the qualities a mentor needs. While searching, continually exhibit a protégé's characteristics.

We can never fully grasp the magnitude or consequences that active leadership can have on people, organizations, and institutions. Leaders are teachers. Leadership devoid of relationship is little more than another form of management. Such a leader is no more than a steward or custodian working a process and using people as a resource. The efficacy of leadership is rooted in trust, and its sincerest application is manifested by example. Mentoring is the pinnacle of a leader's actions; it is a leader's imperative.

Mentoring—leadership at its best—combines the efforts of one life in another. Mentoring is not a spectator sport; it entails risks and challenges. As trust evolves and respect matures, what may have initially begun as a one-on-one training experience progresses into a deep, significant personal relationship. At this point, mentors can influence the Army's future.

Some would disagree that a mentored protégé has an inestimable advantage over unmentored leaders. As evidence they might cite those who have succeeded without mentors. But, in retrospect, few would travel the same path again without help. My father has said, "Learning through the experiences of others does two things. It fills you with experience you probably would not have gained for a long time, and it provides an advantage to you when standing at the same fork in the road in that you have already learned the consequences of one decision." I believe that if a protégé ties together a mentor's thoughts, experiences, and talents and applies them to his walk, he has twice the wisdom.

True leaders touch the hearts of their followers; yearn to teach and mold their followers' minds; and strive to leave a legacy—a part of themselves. The preeminence of the Army, the profession of arms, and the Nation rests on transferring knowledge, skills, and expertise from one generation to the next. Who will be the beneficiary of your knowledge, the heir of your experience? **MR**

## NOTES

1. Charles J. Dalcourt, Jr., © 2002 "Show Me the Way."
2. Peer Systems Consulting Group, Inc., "Mentoring Rationale, Examples, and Our Expertise," accessed 20 January 2002 at <www.mentors.ca/mentorrational.html>. Francois de Salignac de La Mothe-Fenelon's biography is available at <www.gene.edwards.com/cow/FenelonLife.html>.
3. The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, accessed 20 January 2002 at <www.m-w.com>.
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6. Eric K. Shinseki, "The Army Vision: Soldiers on Point for the Nation . . . Persuasive in Peace, Invincible in War," CD ROM, accessed 20 January 2002 at <www.army.mil/vision/visioncd.htm>.
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